background check, I think this is a tremendous amendment. I think it really strengthens the bill.

I thank the gentleman for his work on behalf of children, and I urge support of the amendment.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak in support of the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Michigan is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, we support the amendment.

Many of these are included in the regulations, but you would put it in the statute now and expand them, and I think you have done a very good job in your expansion of that.

I commend you for your work on this. I commend you for your concern for children. It is very important. We certainly want to protect our children, and I think this is a very good amendment and we support it.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. CARNAHAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in House Report 110–116.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 9 offered by Mr. CARNAHAN:

Page 35, after line 10, insert the following (and make such technical and conforming changes as may be appropriate):

(d) ENROLLMENT.—Section 640(g) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9835(g)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(5) In the event that the amounts appropriated to carry out the program under this subchapter do not exceed the amount appropriated in the prior fiscal year, or exceed the amount appropriated in the prior fiscal year by an amount equal to less than the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index For All Urban Consumers, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Head Start grantees may negotiate with the Secretary a reduced funded enrollment level without a reduction in the grant amount if such grantee can demonstrate that such reduction is necessary to maintain the quality of services.

''(A) In accordance with this paragraph, the Secretary shall set up a process for grantees to negotiate the above-mentioned reduced funded enrollment level.

''(B) Under the conditions detailed in this paragraph, the Secretary shall be required to notify grantees of their right to negotiate a reduced funded enrollment level if such grantee can demonstrate that such reduction is necessary to maintain the quality of services.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 348, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to really thank Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member MCKEON for their leadership on this bill under consideration today. The Improving Head Start Act of 2007 is a very good bill, and I am pleased to be able to support it and be here today and speak on this amendment.

I want to inquire first, before I got into the text of this, if there are any others that wanted to speak on our side, having just gotten into the Chamber. If not, I will proceed.

I am presenting this amendment to H.R. 1429 based on recommendations I received from my district Head Start leaders to address the goal of maintaining quality in the Head Start program. My amendment would allow for Head Start grantees to negotiate a funded enrollment level with the HHS Secretary if funding for the program does not keep pace with inflation.

Over the past 3 years, Head Start and Early Head Start have experienced an estimated 8 percent real decline, adjusted for inflation, in Federal funding from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2007. If this trend were to continue, the decline in funding would climb to 10 percent for Head Start programs. If President Bush's budget were to become law, the Head Start programs would suffer an 11 percent cut.

This decline in funding has required already efficient Head Start agencies across the country to tighten their belts even more. Sadly, local agencies are now forced to pass these cuts on to quality staff.

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By default, agencies are unable to compete for the best and brightest of early childhood educators, thus risking the quality of Head Start programs. Our local agencies are forced to make the worst in managerial choices. As Chairman MILLER and others have pointed out, we must maintain and enhance both funding and quality.

In my congressional district, I am proud to say that the four primary organizations responsible for administering Head Start services have successfully revitalized the program in the city of St. Louis. From 2001 to 2003, the enrolled number of children grew from about 1,000 to a full enrollment of 3,000 children.

Unfortunately, the compensation of St. Louis area Head Start staff has lagged behind the salaries of those in comparable positions. After consulting with some of the brightest business leaders in our area, our local agencies have taken extraordinary steps to conserve costs and maximize efficiencies. Even with these steps, agencies are unable to keep staff compensation in line with inflation increases both in wages and insurance costs.

Programs in St. Louis and across the country are at a serious risk of losing quality staff due to this critical situation. In fact, many of you may have agencies within your districts that have experienced worse cuts across their service lines. They have turned to cutting key staff, reducing the number of weeks they operate in a year, and reducing the number of hours they operate in a day just in order to adjust for financial constraints. We must ensure that the historic quality and strength of Head Start is not placed in jeopardy.

Many of us know the vast evidence demonstrating the profound difference Head Start makes both in the lives of children served and in our local communities. I know that has been talked about at great length here in presenting this bill.

I just want to close and say, I think all of us would agree that Head Start programs should not have the right to request reduced enrollment levels unless they have taken all appropriate steps to achieve efficiency first. I want to clarify that my amendment gives HHS the discretion to determine whether or not individual agencies have explored all possible solutions prior to requesting reduced funded enrollment. The grantee must demonstrate that any reduction in enrollment is necessary to maintain the quality of services.

I appreciate, again, all the efforts on this bill that have brought this forth in a bipartisan way, and appreciate the amendment being considered.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CARNAHAN. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment. This is what agencies have to do when the funding isn't sufficient and they are trying to hold on to the number of children, the hours of availability of the program and the quality of the teachers that are there. In the past when we had the cut, I believe the agency, HHS, allowed some local programs to do this. I would hope that this will not be a necessity. We are adding an additional $400 million to this program. I hope that the Appropriations Committee will be able to follow through.

The amendment is a good amendment. I hope we don't have to use it, but it's a good amendment.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Chairman, this amendment allows grantees to negotiate a reduced enrollment level with the Secretary of HHS if the amounts appropriated for Head Start do not exceed the prior year's appropriation or include an increase commensurate with